

Presentation Checklist



Before delivering a presentation to a live audience, make sure all systems are go by running through a quick "pre-flight" checklist.

To avoid common presentation pitfalls, keep the following five points in mind as you create your presentation—and review them again when you're finished.

1. Direction. An effective presentation is like a travel itinerary - it starts with a clear outline of where you're going and how you're getting there. Tell your audience up front where you'll be going and use an agenda slide in the beginning of your presentation to highlight key points. (*For more on this, see Claudyne Wilder's ["Better Presenting: Organize Everything"](#) below.*)

2. Content. The fastest way to lose an audience is to read your entire presentation directly from the slide. Keep bullet points clear and concise. Limit the number of bullets on each slide to no more than seven, or the text will be too small for your audience to read when it's projected onscreen. If you need to add more than seven bullets, divide the content over two slides.

3. Consistency. As with any other element of a presentation, color should help clarify or emphasize your message. Take a few minutes to create a master slide for your presentation. A master slide will help keep colors and fonts coordinated and consistent from slide to slide, and will eliminate the frustration of copying, pasting and double-checking each format change. (*Guidelines for creating master slides are available in the [May 2002](#) issue of *Presentation Directions*.*)

4. Motion. Keep slide animations and sound effects to a minimum. Be consistent in applying animation and transitions, and use special effects for emphasis only—for example, use it to highlight the conclusion of a section or presentation—rather than as a standard feature on every slide.

5. Close. Even the best presentation will fall flat if your audience doesn't know what to do with the information you've given them. If your presentation is purely educational, include a summary slide at the end with the key points you want the audience to remember. If your purpose is to persuade or get a decision, don't forget to end with a call to action so your audience knows what the next steps are.

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